

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listing of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claims 1 – 20 (Cancelled).

Claim 21 (Previously presented) A pit furnace closing system, comprising:

- a furnace structure having an opening at an upper end thereof;
- two beams disposed in spaced parallel relation above the furnace structure;
- a bipartite lid having a cut;
- a planar stainless steel screen formed to mate with the cut of the bipartite lid, the planar stainless steel screen having a through-hole formed therethrough; and,
- a support device hanging from the planar stainless steel screen with a superior portion extending out of the furnace structure, the superior portion being substantially removed from the heat of the furnace structure, wherein, parts to be tempered are suspended on an inferior portion of the support device inside the furnace.

Claim 22 (Previously presented) The pit furnace closing system, according to claim 21, the furnace structure further comprising thermopairs having heating ends disposed in a center of a heating zone.

Claim 23 (Previously presented) The pit furnace closing system, according to claim 21, wherein the two beams are not submitted to the heat and remain substantially at an ambient temperature.

Claim 24 (Previously presented) The pit furnace closing system, according to claim 21, the furnace structure providing for oil heating and having a rectangular format, an inner surface of the furnace structure being coated with refractory bricks fixed with stainless steel pins, wherein an inferior end of each pin is welded to an inferior plate of the furnace structure and a superior end is welded to a superior plate.

Claim 25 (Previously presented) The pit furnace closing system, according to claim 21, wherein gaps between the through-hole and the support device being filled in with wraps.

Claim 26 (Previously presented) The pit furnace closing system, according to claim 21, wherein in the case of two supporting devices being employed for supporting the parts, a plate being interposed in coplanar arrangement between the two supporting devices.